

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 REYKJA 00597 031838Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----009853 031840Z /43
O 031713Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8366

S E C R E T REYKJAVIK 0597

EXDIS

DEPARTMENT REPEAT AS APPROPRIATE

E.O. 11652: XGDS
TAGS: MARR, IC
SUBJECT: AIR TERMINAL DECISION

REF: STATE 112290

1. I CALLED ON PRIME MINISTER HALLGRIMSSON AT NOON TODAY, MAY 3, AND REVIEWED CONTENTS OF REFTEL WITH HIM. PRIME MINISTER EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR US DECISION AND AGREED THAT DETAILS CONCERNING CONTRIBUTIONS BY THE TWO GOVERNMENTS TO THE PROJECT COULD BE WORKED OUT AT A LATER DATE THROUGH FOREIGN MINISTER. PRIME MINISTER ADDED THAT THE GOI WAS INTERESTED IN POSSIBLY STARTING CONSTRUCTION IN LATE 1979 OR EARLY 1980 BUT WOULD AWAIT OUTCOME OF FURTHER DISCUSSIONS BEFORE DETERMINING HOW MUCH COULD BE DONE PRIOR TO OCTOBER 1980 US BUDGET CYCLE. PRIME MINISTER THEN NOTED POSITIVE IMPACT US DECISION WOULD HAVE ON POPULAR SUPPORT FOR CONTINUED PRESENCE OF NATO BASE IN ICELAND. RE POSSIBLE PRESS STATEMENT BY GOI, PRIME MINISTER STATED HE WISHED TO REFLECT ON THIS AND WOULD BE IN TOUCH WITH EMBASSY CONCERNING POINTS I INDICATED WE WOULD WISH SUGGEST IN SUCH EVENT. I TOLD HIM THAT DCM CHRISTENSEN, WHO ACCOMPANIED ME TO MEETING, WAS
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FULLY CONVERSANT WITH THIS ASPECT OF MATTER AND WOULD BE AVAILABLE FOR DISCUSSIONS ON IT DURING MY ABSENCE FROM POST.

2. PRIME MINISTER THEN ASKED WHETHER "ANYONE ELSE" KNEW OF USG DECISION. I INDICATED NO ONE ELSE IN GOI HAD BEEN INFORMED OF DECISION BUT THAT COMICEDEFOR

WAS AWARE OF IT AND OF TIGHT CONTROL ON DISSEMINATION.
I THEN ASKED WHETHER PRIME MINISTER THOUGHT I SHOULD
INFORM FOREIGN MINISTER AGUSTSSON OF DECISION. PRIME
MINISTER READILY AGREED, AND APPOINTMENT WITH THE
FOREIGN MINISTER WAS PROMPTLY ARRANGED FOR THIS AFTERNOON.

3. I SUBSEQUENTLY MET WITH FOREIGN MINISTER AGUSTSSON
AT 3:30 P.M. AT THE ALTHING BUILDING. HE HAD ALREADY
RECEIVED WORD OF THE US DECISION BUT WELCOMED OPPORTUNITY
TO HEAR IT DIRECTLY FROM ME. I WENT OVER SAME POINTS
I HAD MADE TO PRIME MINISTER. AGUSTSSON MENTIONED
SEVERAL TIMES DURING THE COURSE OF THE DISCUSSION THAT
FOLLOWED MY PRESENTATION HOW PLEASED HE WAS WITH DECISION.
HE SAID THAT HE FORESAW NO REAL PROBLEM FOR ICELAND
IF US FUNDS WERE NOT AVAILABLE BEFORE OCTOBER 1980 SINCE
THE GOI WILL NEED SOME TIME TO REFINE ITS PLANS AND
START PREPARING BLUE PRINTS AND DRAWINGS. FUNDING
FOR THESE INITIAL STEPS WILL BE SOUGHT SOON FROM
THE ALTHING, AFTER WHICH FOLLOW-UP BILATERAL TALKS
COULD BE INITIATED EITHER IN REYKJAVIK OR WASHINGTON.
HE SAW NO NEED FOR A PRESS RELEASE UNTIL ADDITIONAL
DETAILS HAD BEEN WORKED OUT AND HE PROMISED THAT
BEFORE ANY RELEASE WERE ISSUED, THE FOREIGN MINISTRY
WOULD CONSULT WITH THE EMBASSY TO ASSURE THAT IT
REFLECTED OUR POINTS OF VIEW.

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4. AGUSTSSON CONCLUDED BY NOTING THAT THE IMPORTANT
THING FOR THE MOMENT FOR THE GOI AND FOR HIM PERSONALLY
WAS THAT THE USG HAS BEEN ABLE TO RESPOND FAVORABLY
TO THIS IMPORTANT PRIORITY REQUEST FROM ICELAND.
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